

ACT II] BEING EARNEST
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Algernon. My letters! But, my own sweet Cecily,
I have never
 written you any letters.

Cecily. You need hardly remind me of that, Ernest.
I remember
 only too well that I was forced to write your
letters for you.
I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes
oftener.

Algernon. Oh, do let me read them, Cecily!

Cecily. Oh, I couldn't possibly. They would make
you far too
conceited. [*Replaces box.*] The three you
wrote me after I
had broken off the engagement are so beautiful,
and so badly
spelled, that even now I can hardly read
them without
crying a little.

Algernon. But was our engagement ever broken
off?

Cecily. Of course it was. On the sand of last
March. You
can see the entry if you like. [*Shows diary.*] "
To-day I
broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it
is better to
do so. The weather still continues charming.**

Algernon. But why on earth did you break it off?

What had
I done? I had done nothing at all. Cecily, I
am very much
hurt indeed to hear you broke it off.
Particularly when the
weather was so charming.

Cecily. It would hardly have been a really serious
engagement
if it hadn't been broken off at least once*
But I forgave
you before the week was out.

Algernon. [*Crossing to her, and kneeling.*] What a
perfect angel
 you are, Cecily!

Cecily. You dear romantic boy! [*He kisses her, she
puts
fingers through his hair.*] I hope your hair curls
naturally,
does it?

Algernon. Yes, darling, with a little help from
others.

Cecily. I am so glad.

Algernon. You'll never break off our engagement
again, Cecily?

Cecily. I don't think I could break it off now
that I have
actually met you. Besides, of course, there is
the question
of your name.

Algernon. Yes, of course.

[*Nervously-*

Cecily. You must not laugh at me, darling, but it
had
 always
been a girlish dream of mine to love some one
whose
 name
was Ernest. [*Algernon rises, Cecily also.*] There is
some-
thing in that name that seems to inspire
absolute
 confidence.
I pity any poor married woman whose husband
is
 not
 called
Ernest.

Algernon. But, my dear child, do you mean to say
you
 could
not love me if I had some other name?